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DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/A, INL, EUR/PRM, INR, OSD FOR
FLOURNOY, CENTCOM FOR CG CJTF-82, POAD, JICENT KABUL FOR
COS USFOR-A

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2019
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: AFGHANS TO CONTINUE POPPY ERADICATION

Classified By: DEPUTY AMBASSADOR FRANCIS J. RICCIARDONE FOR REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Minister of Interior (MOI) Hanif Atmar appealed to the U.S. not to completely reverse our public opposition to poppy cultivation. He feared that doing so would send the wrong message to farmers across Afghanistan, and lead to a surge in poppy cultivation. Atmar charged that the U.S. was going from one extreme to another in our policy and charged that we were doing so without consultations with us, your friends who are most directly affected by what you say. He said it is important to keep eradication as one element of an overall narcotics policy. The primary element, he believes, would be the creation of an intelligence-led counternarcotics police force. Informed that the U.S. had ended funding for the Poppy Eradication Force (PEF), Atmar said the GIROA nonetheless must find the resources to continue to use PEF for some level of eradication. MOI also would use PEF as a special force to go after narcotics kingpins, and for other special purposes, for example, to offset the shortfalls on elections security and convoy security. END SUMMARY

¶2. (S) In a meeting with Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone on other subjects on August 2nd, Atmar said that President Karzai was caught off guard by the recent announcement by Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP), Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, that the U.S. will no longer support poppy eradication. President Karzai doesn't know how to deal with this, Atmar said. We'd like to advise you not to move from one extreme to another. Please don't make this move so quickly and, when you are announcing policy positions that affect us, your friends, so directly, we expect that you will consult with us in advance. Atmar specifically asked that we report these concerns to Washington.

¶3. (S) Ricciardone reminded Atmar that while we were ending our funding for the PEF, we had stated publically that we have no objection to any GIROA eradication programs it may wish to continue. We were simply re-directing our counternarcotics support to more effective purposes, i.e. interdiction of the processing and trade in opium and heroin. Atmar agreed that it is important to focus on going after the major narco-traffickers, and requested support to create an intelligence-led counternarcotics police force. He stressed that intelligence exploitation and intelligence sharing with the Afghans are critical tools in forming an effective anti-narcotics strategy. But, he emphasized that eradication efforts are also an important symbol of Afghanistan's overall anti-narcotics policy and laws that the U.S. should

not dismiss. This country must have a credible eradication force to enforce the law, Atmar said. He plans to raise this issue during SRAP,s next trip to Afghanistan. We welcome focused discussions on this new policy, Atmar said. Meanwhile, he urged, Please say nothing that will give our farmers the idea that the pressure is off, or that the U.S. does not care about poppy cultivation, otherwise we will see an explosion in production, and we do not want that.

¶4. (S) Atmar was passionate about counternarcotics programs, reminding us that he has worked this issue for the last 15 years. He said that in order to succeed, Afghanistan needs technical capacity - with an emphasis on standing up an intelligence-led counternarcotics police force, mentors, and operational funds. He urged that training Afghans to support all levels of counternarcotics, especially in intelligence collection and analysis, would be significantly cheaper for the U.S. than hiring contractors to do this work.

¶5. (S) We advised Atmar that he could re-direct the 600 member U.S.-trained and equipped PEF to more useful immediate purposes. Nonetheless, Atmar insisted that he would continue to use PEF for eradication. He would also expand PEF into a special force designed to pursue major narco-traffickers. In order to fill immediate needs, with the poppy harvest now over, Atmar said he would use the PEF to provide security for elections and for ISF fuel convoys.
EIKENBERRY